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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 4 November 1991, at 10 a.m.

President:	Mr. SHIHABI	(Saudi Arabia)
later:	Mr. GHEZAL (Vice-President)	(Tunisia)

- Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations: report of the Secretary-General [143]

- Election to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs [17] (continued)

  (c) Election of nineteen members of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law

- Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: third report of the General Committee [8] (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 143

STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/46/568)

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): I should like to inform the Assembly that I have received a letter dated 25 October 1991 from the permanent representative of Norway on behalf of the Western European and Other States requesting that the Assembly should hear in plenary meeting a statement by the observer of Switzerland during the debate on agenda item 143.

Members will recall that in accordance with established practice of the General Assembly, observer non-Member States may normally make statements only in the main committees. However, following consultations and taking into account the importance attached to the issues under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly should take a decision to hear the observer of Switzerland in the course of the debate in plenary meeting on this agenda item. I take it that there is no objection to this proposal.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate should be closed today at 12:30 p.m. If I hear no objection, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Arabic): I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names as soon as possible.

Mr. HUSLID (Norway): I have the honour today to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries - Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway - regarding a subject which deeply concerns our Governments and inspires vigorous public debate in our countries.

(Mr. Huslid, Norway)

In no other field of human endeavour than in the area of humanitarian emergency assistance can timely and effective response be more directly and dramatically measured in terms of human suffering and lost lives - and fortunately, sometimes also in lives saved - or in terms of social and material devastation. This fact is a serious reminder of the gravity of the challenge we must face and the responsibility we must assume during this session.

The dramatic increase in the number and scope of emergencies during the past year has provoked a long-needed and, it must be said, positive debate on measures to improve the international response to emergency humanitarian needs. A convergence of views emerged during the second session of the Economic and Social Council last summer. The informal summary given by the Chairman at that time, resulting from those discussions, has provided a useful basis for preparations at the national, regional and Secretatriat levels. We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report to this session of the General Assembly. It provides concrete proposals and gives us valuable guidance in our discussions.

(Mr. Huslid, Norway)

In his report the Secretary-General has outlined the mandates and responsibilities of the various United Nations agencies in the fields of early warning, prevention, response, rehabilitation and development in relation to emergencies. We have a considerable capacity today for the necessary comprehensive responses. Still, further strengthening of each of these agencies in their respective areas of operation is vital.

The responses, in their respective areas, of the United Nations agencies concerned require improved cooperation and coordination. It is encouraging to note that progress has been made in this respect: during the past few months, a number of inter-agency coordination meetings and information-sharing meetings which included concerned countries and international and non-governmental agencies have taken place in Geneva. The Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) has functioned as a secretariat in organizing such meetings and in preparing the welcome practice of launching consolidated United Nations appeals: we very much appreciate this practice. We look forward to further discussions with a view to clarifying how UNDRO can best play its role within the framework of a coordinated effort.

Cooperation and coordination practices are also being developed at the field level, for example in the context of the emergency operations in the Gulf and in the Horn of Africa. Formalizing these practices at Headquarters and field levels would ensure improved cooperation and coordination of responses by all parties concerned.

There is a need for the governing councils and bodies of the various United Nations agencies to review and strengthen the preparedness and the response capabilities of their organizations. Efforts should be made by us

(Mr. Huslid, Norway)

all to ensure that the General Assembly takes a decision encouraging such a process.

The situation of internally displaced persons has been referred to by the Secretary-General in the context of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The number of internally displaced persons today exceeds 20 million. Their need for protection, assistance and solutions should be dealt with in a comprehensive manner by the international community. Here, we hope that the analytical report for the Commission on Human Rights, being prepared by the Secretary-General will comprehensively review the needs of internally displaced persons and present proposals to address their plight.

In the debate during the past year on ways to improve the United Nations response to emergency situations, there has been an increasing recognition of the need for restructuring the present coordination and management system for emergency assistance. It should be clear by now that in order to carry out our task successfully we shall have to approach the various questions of reform with an open mind.

Particularly in man-made emergencies, United Nations action should be combined with political initiatives to facilitate humanitarian relief and long-term solutions. The international community looks to the Secretary-General for leadership in dealing with these issues. The whole range of the political, humanitarian and development capabilities of the United Nations must be mobilized for a coherent and effective response.

Given the importance and dimensions of the task, we strongly support the proposals that a high-level official assist the Secretary-General in this task.

(Mr. Huslid, Norway)

The official should possess personal qualities such as to ensure both the necessary coordination and the maximum political backing for United Nations humanitarian operations, particularly in situations where there are conflicting political views and interests. It is important to stress that this high-ranking coordinator should be able to draw on the capabilities of the existing operational organizations.

It is also vital that the demands on the United Nations systems be equalled by the necessary means. Through concerted action, the Secretary-General and the United Nations agencies must be provided with the tools and conditions necessary to be able to respond.

As I mentioned earlier, the emergency response capabilities, including funding flexibility, of the various United Nations agencies should be further strengthened. Still, in major, complex emergencies, this will not be sufficient. We therefore support the proposed establishment of a central emergency revolving fund of $50 million by means of a one-time assessment on Member States. It should be in the interests of all Governments to contribute to an enhanced United Nations emergency response capability.

As donors, we have a responsibility to provide the necessary resources with the fewest possible strings attached in order to ensure effective responses. Our bilateral initiatives should not run counter to United Nations actions, but complement and strengthen them. Let me here underline that the Nordic countries have long valued the experience and capabilities of the non-governmental organizations. They have a major ability to raise public awareness and support in our countries; they have well-established local counterparts in most countries affected by recurrent emergencies. We are convinced that increased cooperation between the United Nations agencies

(Mr. Huslid, Norway)

and the non-governmental organizations could provide a valuable supplement and complement to effective humanitarian responses to people in distress.

As to the affected countries, they have the primary responsibility for developing and enhancing their prevention, preparedness and response capabilities. They face heavy burdens, but can also contribute to and facilitate United Nations action in a variety of ways. At the same time, they should be able to count on international support.

The full cooperation of Governments is also required in order to ensure access to all persons in need of assistance. Here it must be said that in all too many cases, political motives have prevented humanitarian assistance from entering a country or from reaching population groups badly needing assistance. Without a fundamental change in attitudes towards such obstacles, we shall never be truly successful.

All efforts should be made to create conditions for the most effective use of humanitarian aid, which must always be related to, and find its logical continuation in, rehabilitation and development measures. Furthermore, the protection mandate of the UNHCR with regard to monitoring and assisting in reintegrating repatriates into their countries of origin, and various other measures such as the negotiation of ground rules in cases of conflict have been highlighted by the Secretary-General in his report. We welcome his call for further refinement, by building on earlier decisions and experiences, of these necessary conditions for an effective humanitarian response. We must develop these principles jointly within the framework of the Charter.

(Mr. Huslid, Norway)

Finally, we would like to emphasize our commitment to the United Nations and to the process of improving its ability to respond effectively in emergencies. We hope that the cooperative spirit that has prevailed in these discussions will lead to decisive action at this session for the benefit of the millions of victims of disasters around the world.

Mr. VAN SCHAIK (Netherlands): On behalf of the European Community and its member States, I will address the important issue of the role and responsibility of the United Nations system in providing humanitarian assistance in response to emergencies. Several proposals designed to improve both the management and the effectiveness of the response of the United Nations system to emergencies have been presented recently by the Secretary-General, by us, the Twelve, and by other delegations. I wish in particular to thank the Secretary-General for his very interesting reports, which contain concrete proposals.

Our proposals have much in common in that they are all geared towards strengthening coordination and action in this area. While we know that what constitutes an emergency is not difficult to recognize in practical terms - those who are affected know when and where an emergency has happened - it is much more difficult, and probably not necessary, to define what an emergency is. The sole purpose of this debate is to place the United Nations in a better position to provide a rapid and well-coordinated response to emergencies, to help the United Nations in saving the lives of people in desperate need as a result of natural disasters, man-made emergencies or a combination of the two.

Why has emergency assistance suddenly become such an important item on the agenda? Events of the past few months have created and are still creating

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

a widespread public outcry and indignation. No one can remain untouched by pictures of starving children in the Horn of Africa, of the floods in Bangladesh and of the flow of refugees in the Gulf region. The fact that human dignity was denied and suffering tolerated too long without effective and timely action being taken shows that there is an urgent need to deal with problems and shortcomings in the delivery of emergency aid.

The most recent emergencies have occurred in developing countries, which are particularly vulnerable to their effects. When an emergency occurs, whether man-made or natural, its impact is aggravated by the limited capacity of those countries to cope with the effects. No two disasters are the same, but examples as varied as the recent earthquake in San Francisco and the cyclone in Bangladesh demonstrate two points clearly, namely that sustainable development makes the impact of disasters less severe and that a better developed infrastructure makes them easier to cope with. Over the past few years, disasters have become increasingly complicated and protracted, which is another indication of the insufficient capacity of developing countries to cope with them. It is clear that emergency assistance alone will not suffice. The root causes of the emergencies - such as poverty, environmental degradation and situations of strife and conflict - must also be addressed. Emergency assistance, important as it is, cannot replace development assistance. In fact, it is part of a continuum from emergency assistance via rehabilitation and reconstruction to development. The only insurance against the catastrophic impact of disasters and humanitarian crises is ultimately sustainable development.

Early warning is an important tool in preventing disasters from occurring, as regards both sudden natural disasters, drought and crop failure,

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

and situations of strife and conflict. There should be a regular pooling and analysis of all available data and the data should be made available to disaster-prone countries. It is also crucial to strengthen the capacity of the institutions in those countries to use this information effectively and to set up their own preparedness and mitigation programmes, which can contribute to decreasing the toll of disasters dramatically. In this respect, the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction has an all-important role to play.

The role of disaster-stricken countries themselves in providing relief on the ground after a disaster has taken place is often underestimated. Even in poor countries the concrete self-help contributions to disaster relief made by the people directly affected, by national governments and by local non-governmental organizations is often more significant and speedier than contributions made by external donors. It is therefore of crucial importance that this local disaster-management capacity be enhanced.

Emergency relief by and through the United Nations system supplements these local capacities and - it is important to stress this - provides disaster-stricken countries with adequate safeguards as regards respect for national sovereignty. The United Nations Charter confirms this principle, which was recently reaffirmed in General Assembly resolution 45/100. The resolution recognizes that it is up to each country first and foremost to take care of the victims of emergencies. At the same time, however, States have an equal responsibility to facilitate the effective delivery of emergency assistance to their people in dire need and to provide access to them. The work of organizations with a purely humanitarian mission should not be inhibited.

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

Comprehensive action with regard to sudden and complex emergencies requires the active involvement of the United Nations system, as well as of the disaster-stricken countries, donors, and governmental and non-governmental organizations. All of them share a common goal, that is, to save lives and alleviate the suffering of all affected people. The United Nations and its specialized agencies should be in a position to play a central role. The capacity of the Secretary-General to provide leadership in this respect should therefore be strengthened. This is true for disaster prevention and mitigation, for preparedness for disasters, and for disaster management.

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

A first, interesting discussion on this issue took place during the summer session of the Economic and Social Council, and a comprehensive summary, with concrete ideas, was presented by the Vice-President of the Council, Ambassador Eliasson. In this connection, we also welcome the Secretary-General's full and concrete report on the review of the capacity, experience and coordination arrangements in the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance. As I have said before, that report contains many valuable recommendations and ideas, which we share. It provides a thorough analysis of all activities in the field of humanitarian assistance; it does not conceal shortcomings and overlapping; and it is a clear expression of the generally felt need for improved coordination.

Disasters and emergencies always create chaos. Therefore proper crisis management is the most important ingredient of effective disaster relief, both locally and internationally. Strong, experienced leadership and clear lines of authority are vital if the needed prompt and orderly response is to be ensured. The United Nations system must play a crucial role at the national and international levels. It should provide the necessary authority to mobilize the international community and relief agencies, so that, in the event of any emergency, they could respond swiftly and effectively. The United Nations should be put in a better position to live up to these high but justified expectations, particularly as regards large-scale, sometimes complex and protracted emergencies. Too often, in such cases, the response has been late and of an ad hoc nature.

Therefore the Secretary-General and others propose that the role of the United Nations system should be strengthened, so that the delivery of emergency relief may be made more effective and more rapid. To that end, the

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

European Community itself has presented specific proposals. A substantial package of measures, including readily available resources and improved coordination, is needed if things are to be made to work better. Among the necessary reforms is the appointment of a high-level coordinator for emergency humanitarian aid, with direct access in New York to the Secretary-General. The coordinator's task would be to facilitate prompt, orderly and coordinated responses to both natural and man-made emergencies, and to do so in close cooperation with the United Nations agencies and organizations involved and in consultation with the disaster-stricken countries and the international donor community. With the confidence of all parties involved, the coordinator could also help remove practical and political obstacles to relief activities.

Another important task of the high-level coordinator would be to operate a coordination mechanism whereby, in a given situation, the division of responsibilities between executing agencies would be clearly defined, and tasks and responsibilities allocated within the respective mandates of those agencies. To that end, the coordinator should chair, at Geneva, an emergency standing committee consisting, on a permanent basis, of the heads of all United Nations agencies and organizations involved in relief assistance, and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Organization for Migration should have a standing invitation to participate. The committee should foster a "culture of coordination" among all participants and should provide a meeting-point, through a process of consultation, for recipient countries, the donor community and non-governmental organizations. Practical arrangements between the high-level coordinator and relevant United Nations agencies and

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

organisations could be put in place, with a view to facilitating immediate action in the event of an emergency.

The coordinator should combine the functions of the present United Nations Disaster Relief Office (UNDRO) coordinator and of the Secretary-General's current special or personal representatives dealing with particular emergencies, as well as their staffs. Thus, the coordinator would be able to give UNDRO, which would serve as the basis for his secretariat, greater authority, rendering it more effective in facilitating actual relief operations. The activities of UNDRO, covering the full disaster continuum - comprising early warning, prevention, preparedness and mitigation - should be strengthened under his leadership. Also, the vast expertise and institutional memory that UNDRO has acquired in the 20 years of its existence could be utilized to the maximum. We note with appreciation UNDRO's availability to support and serve a high-level coordinator if one is appointed. That availability is confirmed in the Chairman's summary record of the fourth meeting of officials in charge of national emergency relief services, which took place at Geneva on 1 and 2 October 1991.

The high-level coordinator would put together consolidated appeals - as is already done in some cases - on the basis of tailor-made plans. Provision would be made for subheadings, so that direct responses could be given to the appeals made to participating agencies.

As is also proposed by the Secretary-General, the high-level coordinator should have at his disposal a revolving emergency fund, to be established through the provision of new and additional resources. That fund, consisting of readily available money, would make it possible to meet initial financial needs in emergency situations, and the money would be allocated in

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consultation with the emergency standing committee. The fund should be replenished by agencies benefiting from it. In addition, agencies should be invited to participate in it, using their own resources.

Several United Nations organizations and agencies have operational reserves or emergency funds of varying magnitude. In larger-scale emergencies involving more agencies of the United Nations, the standing emergency committee should discuss the use of the existing start-up funds, with a view to facilitating the effective utilization of those funds and of the revolving fund and preventing gaps or duplication in the provision of financing.

Lastly, the high-level coordinator should keep an up-to-date register of human and material stand-by capacities of the United Nations system, of States and of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Those resources should be available at short notice in different emergency situations. They should consist, for example, of quick-dispatch relief teams, emergency stockpiles, food supplies and logistical resources. All relevant United Nations agencies and organizations should be asked to update their existing rosters and to put their facilities at the high-level coordinator's disposal. Standing arrangements with States and other interested parties for the early dispatch of stand-by teams and materials should be prepared. Recruitment and procurement procedures and contracts should be standardized to the greatest possible extent. We welcome initiatives taken by individual agencies in this respect. I refer, for example, to the recent agreement between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Norwegian and Danish refugee councils on the secondment of staff at the request of UNHCR when an emergency occurs.

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

Effective coordination in the field is just as important as arrangements at Headquarters level with which I have dealt so far. We emphasize the principle that at the country level a single senior United Nations official should be in charge of coordinating the efforts of the United Nations. This official should be trained in disaster management and be able to liaise closely with the government and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, thereby facilitating relief operations and promoting the use of all locally available relief capacities. In view of the continuum of disaster relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development, the United Nations resident coordinator system should be used. This would ensure a speedy transition from relief to development. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-UNDRO Training Programme deserves increased support.

The Coordinator should draw on the experience and the capacity of non-governmental organizations. These non-governmental organizations have accumulated highly valuable expertise that could add to the capacity of the United Nations for quick and cost-effective responses to emergencies. They cover the full spectrum of needs, from relief to rehabilitation, and often provide assistance to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Their important role as operational partners to agencies of the United Nations and other organizations cannot be overemphasized. Full use should be made of the capacities of non-governmental organizations in the actual delivery of emergency assistance at the field level.

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

The European Community and its member States are looking forward to a further exchange of views on the urgent issue of improving the United Nations emergency-response capacity. We welcome this debate and the discussion of the various proposals which have been presented in an informal open-ended working group. I am convinced that we shall be able to merge the various ideas into concrete proposals for improvement of the emergency-response capacity of the United Nations. In the interest of people whose lives are threatened by emergencies and whose human dignity is at stake, it is crucial for the United Nations to be prepared and to be able to act.

Mr. JIN Yongjian (China) (interpretation from Chinese): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for the report he prepared on the item entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations". We should like to make a few observations on this question.

The Chinese delegation is of the view that, although many agencies of the United Nations system are involved in humanitarian emergency assistance activities, the division of labour among these agencies is clear-cut. They have all succeeded within their respective mandates in providing emergency relief assistance to the victims of disasters or refugees, and have positively contributed to alleviating their suffering and minimizing property losses in the stricken areas.

Humanitarian emergency assistance is provided primarily to people in need of emergency relief due to natural disasters, as well as to refugees or persons displaced as a result of disasters, natural or man-made, to help tide them over their difficulties in their daily life and rebuild their

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homeland. At present, there are well-functioning agencies of the United Nations responsible for the coordination of emergency relief assistance to these persons. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is in charge of coordination in providing humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced persons, while the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator is a coordinating agency responsible for coordinating emergency relief assistance. In setting up this coordinating agency for disaster relief, the General Assembly, in resolution 2816 (XXVI), adopted on 14 December 1971, pointed out that the Secretary-General is called upon

> "to appoint a Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, who will report directly to him and who will be authorized, on his behalf ... to mobilize, direct and co-ordinate the relief activities of the various organizations of the United Nations system in response to a request for disaster assistance from a stricken State; to co-ordinate United Nations assistance with assistance given by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, in particular by the International Red Cross; to receive, on behalf of the Secretary-General, contributions offered to him for disaster relief assistance to be carried out by the United Nations, its agencies and programmes for particular emergency situations; ... to promote the study, prevention, control and prediction of natural disasters, including the collection and dissemination of information concerning technological developments". (resolution 2816 (XXVI), para. 1, and para. 1 (b), (c), (d) and (f))

(Mr. Jin Yongjian, China)

In accordance with this resolution, the Office of the Disaster Relief Coordinator was set up in the United Nations system and a senior Disaster Relief Coordinator at the Under-Secretary-General level was appointed by the Secretary-General, to be responsible for the coordination of all the emergency relief activities of agencies of the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Practice over the years has proved that the Disaster Relief Coordinator's response to disasters has been expeditious, his assistance to the stricken States in assessing their losses and needs for assistance timely, and his coordination of assistance given by the international community and international organizations effective. We highly appreciate the work of the Office of the Disaster Relief Coordinator and hope that it will continue to play its role of coordination of emergency relief assistance entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

In our view, the proposed appointment of another senior coordinator for humanitarian emergency assistance needs further discussion. First, there is already a well-functioning coordinating agency for emergency assistance and a senior Coordinator at the Under-Secretary-General level. We do not see any need for the appointment of yet another high-level coordinator. Moreover, the key to emergency assistance lies in its expeditiousness and timeliness. The appointment of another coordinator will not only increase expenditure but, more important, result in the overlapping of agencies, complicating bureaucratic procedures and, because of delays, missing opportunities to provide emergency assistance.

(Mr. Jin Yongjian, China)

The aforementioned views do not imply the absence of a need further to improve and strengthen the work of the existing coordinating agencies of the United Nations. In our view, their role should not be weakened. The relevant agencies should continue to combine their experience and improve their work so as to avoid undue repetition and waste of emergency assistance materials. Furthermore, questions remain not only as to how to bring about closer cooperation among the various agencies but also as to how to bring into full play the role of the international community, agencies of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations in providing emergency assistance.

(Mr. Jin Yongjian, China)

In view of this, we propose:

First, setting up an inter-agency coordinating mechanism, for example an ad hoc inter-agency joint committee for emergency relief assistance, comprising the existing agencies of the United Nations system involved in disaster relief activities, in which, inter alia, ways of responding to large-scale and complex emergencies by the international community, United Nations agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations will be discussed, measures for providing assistance will be studied and means of coordination will be considered;

Secondly, that the committee should be chaired on a rotating basis by the heads of the existing major relevant United Nations agencies and that its members should be the heads of other agencies;

Thirdly, that, with a view to ensuring a speedy response to disasters by the United Nations, a central emergency revolving fund should be set up. In accordance with paragraph 1 (d) of General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI), the Disaster Relief Coordinator is authorized to receive, on behalf of the Secretary-General, contributions offered to him for disaster relief assistance to be carried out by the United Nations, its agencies and programmes for particular emergency situations. The fund should be at the disposal of the Disaster Relief Coordinator on behalf of the Secretary-General.

China's proposal is not intended as a substitute for the existing coordinating agencies. On the contrary, its purpose is to enhance coordination among the various agencies and bring into full play the role of the United Nations system in providing humanitarian emergency assistance to the stricken areas. We are of the view that the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance is of great significance not only at the international

(Mr. Jin Yongjian, China)

level but even more at the country level, particularly assistance provided by the Governments of the stricken countries. We should respect and support the coordination work carried out by those Governments.

It is essential, once people suffer severe loss of life and property as a result of natural or man-made disasters, that the international community should provide timely emergency assistance to them. The international community has an obligation to help people in difficulty make proper arrangements for their daily life, rebuild their homeland and restore production. This assistance is in the fullest humanitarian spirit. None the less, we hope that such humanitarian assistance will not be affected in any way by differences of political system, ideology, race or colour between States, nor should any preconditions be attached to such assistance. The assistance as such should be provided in full respect for the sovereignty of the recipient States, for otherwise it will be deprived of its intrinsic meaning.

Mr. LAVROV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): The improvement of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance is one of the Organization's priority tasks. Emergencies affecting millions of people are occurring more and more frequently as a result of natural disasters, environmental calamities, industrial accidents, famine and war.

Assistance to the victims is provided by a number of organizations, programmes and funds of the United Nations system, as well as by other international organizations, including non-governmental organizations.

The need for coordinating all these efforts has long been recognized by the world community. One of the first steps in that direction was taken in

(Mr. Lavrov, USSR)

1971 by the establishment of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO), which is doing much to mobilize relief for the victims of natural and other disasters.

The need for further steps to improve coordination was reflected in resolution 36/225, in which the General Assembly decided that the Secretary-General should designate a lead entity in the United Nations system to provide an effective international response to major disasters. The experience gained in the past 10 years confirms that this is a sound approach but suggests that it must be applied on a permanent rather than ad hoc basis. Our discussion today is essentially aimed at finding a solution to the problem of institutionalizing the coordinating mechanisms of humanitarian emergency assistance, so as to make full use of the unique capacities of the entire United Nations system, together with those of the non-governmental organizations, in order to provide a prompt, effective and harmonized response to emergencies and disasters, taking into account all their aspects.

The recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on the capacity of the United Nations system to provide humanitarian emergency assistance (A/46/568), the numerous studies carried out inside and outside the United Nations and the exchanges at the summer session of the Economic and Social Council, under the presidency of Ambassador Eliasson, have revealed a broad consensus about the ways to improve the Organization's performance in that area. Agreement is emerging on the need for structural reforms and for ensuring complementarity of the efforts made at the global, regional, bilateral and national levels with a view to maximizing their cumulative effect. Moreover, all Members are agreed on the need to make more extensive and regular use of the available facilities of the United Nations system in

(Mr. Lavrov, USSR)

order to ensure the early detection of emergencies, improve prevention of natural and other disasters and relate all these efforts to development objectives.

Thus, we believe that the outlines of a resolution to be adopted at this session of the General Assembly are becoming increasingly visible. In our view, almost all the elements for solving the problems of coordination in emergency humanitarian assistance already exist and may be found within the existing multilateral structures. What is crucial today is to put these elements together properly in a structured and organically unified mechanism capable of ensuring efficiency and complementarity, while eliminating duplication of work and unnecessary competition. Therefore, as we see it, the primary task is to implement administrative measures that have long been needed.

We support the idea of setting up the post of a high-level coordinator for all matters relating to humanitarian emergency assistance, who would act on behalf of the Secretary-General, would have direct access to him and would be mandated to coordinate the United Nations system's operations designed to respond to various disasters in a timely and adequate manner. The coordinator, relying on the apparatus of UNDRO, would harmonize on a regular basis the efforts of the international organizations involved, most of which are, as members know, based at Geneva. To that end, an inter-agency committee, presided over by the coordinator, could be established.

Such reforms would, we believe, considerably improve interaction between New York and Geneva, the two United Nations capitals traditionally engaged in coordinating system-wide activities in various spheres.

(Mr. Lavrov, USSR)

At the same time, it is clear that New York and Geneva are not where disasters usually strike. It is therefore important to pay attention also to regional mechanisms for implementing new approaches based on the human and other resources available in the United Nations system. In particular, the inter-agency committee could hold some of its sessions away from Geneva, possibly at the headquarters of regional economic commissions or other regional bodies.

From the very start of United Nations humanitarian assistance activities, it has been the understanding of the world community that humanitarian assistance should be made available to victims of every kind of disasters, both natural and man-made. That approach is laid down in the mandate of UNDRO and in numerous subsequent resolutions on the subject. The relevance of this comprehensive approach has increased dramatically in recent years, primarily because of the enormous numbers of people being uprooted by disasters of every kind. According to United Nations estimates, their number is now about 41 million, most of them being displaced persons.

(Mr. Lavrov, USSR)

Mechanisms for extending international humanitarian assistance to this category of persons are at present among the least developed, and it appears that this question should be given special attention in the future.

Overall, as we see it, after adopting a resolution on the aforementioned administrative measures to improve the coordination of emergency assistance, the General Assembly at this session should also provide for starting work on the further development of the basis in international law for future activities by international organizations in this area. Such work could eventually produce a generally acceptable set of principles, criteria and forms of response by the world community to various humanitarian emergencies, taking into account all the aspects involved. That work will undoubtedly be lengthy and complicated, but it must be begun. Frank and business-like discussions would make it possible to reach agreement on politically sensitive issues of humanitarian assistance and to look for solutions that would protect the human rights of the millions of people who are caught in a desperate situation which is not of their making.

We could then dispel the well-known concerns about what is usually described as "humanitarian intervention". In fact, we should talk about formulating the principles and norms of humanitarian solidarity.

All these are important tasks for the future, tasks the world community must start dealing with.

At the present session we can and should reach agreement on specific elements of administrative reform in the existing organizational structures of humanitarian assistance. We hope that our discussion will produce understandings on the format for a relevant decision by the General Assembly.

(Mr. Lavrov, USSR)

Our delegation stands ready to make a constructive contribution to the work that lies ahead.

Mr. MISSARY (Yemen) (interpretation from Arabic): The review by the General Assembly of the item under consideration, namely, "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations", reflects the depth of the United Nations understanding of the different aspects of the international community's response in cases of emergency. At the same time, it allows a common and clear perspective of the aspects that can lead to reinforcing the measures taken by the Organization. The adoption by the General Assembly over the past few years of significant resolutions on the provision of special emergency assistance in response to natural disasters highlights the extreme importance of the human role the United Nations plays in helping stricken countries which suffer great losses in human lives or the displacement of hundreds of thousands of their citizens. Such assistance also contributes to those countries' development efforts.

Response to natural or man-made disasters over the past few years has brought home to all the need to increase assistance which remained at a low level, notwithstanding its vital importance. Hence, the General Assembly is called upon now, more than ever before, to increase financial resources and make them easily available. This process requires, first, a political will and a belief in the effective role played by the United Nations and its institutions in this respect.

The consequences of the latest man-made disasters such as the problems of refugees, returnees and displaced persons, have demonstrated that it is vitally important for the United Nations to set up a framework programme that

(Mr. Missary, Yemen)

would aim inter alia at providing stability, safety and the basic necessities of life for such victims and, at the same time, promote the implementation of economic and social development plans through the provision of assistance earmarked for that purpose.

Yemen believes in the importance of assistance, especially that which is aimed at linking emergency relief to sustainable development in both the medium and long terms. At the same time, we share the view of many delegations that such assistance should not be used as a pretext to interfere in the internal political affairs of the stricken countries. It is important that such assistance should remain on the lofty plane we should aim at. The main objective of assistance is to shore up and enhance the natural capabilities of developing countries that are vulnerable to natural disasters. Consequently, assistance should go beyond short-term objectives in a manner that would strengthen national offices and give them an important role to play. Training courses for local personnel should be intensified and technology should be provided in the area of mitigation-prevention and preparedness in coping with such disasters in observance of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

We support the Secretary-General's proposal contained in his report dated 17 October 1991 on the establishment of a United Nations central emergency revolving fund under the authority of the Secretary-General. We also support his proposal that a capital amount of $50 million should be allocated to that fund at the beginning. In the meantime, donor contributions for each individual case should continue. We hope that this fund will be under the

(Mr. Missary, Yemen)

personal control of the Secretary-General so that he can make use of the expertise of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator and other specialized agencies.

Yemen is not opposed to the proposal of appointing a high-level coordinator to assist the Secretary-General in responding to emergency situations in order to exercise the Secretary-General's leadership role to maximum effect. That would improve the rationalization processes at present under way in the United Nations especially in the economic and social fields and reinforce the role of the specialized agencies in carrying out their mandate in the best way possible. In the meantime, we must avoid duplication of efforts. In this respect, we stress the need to conduct more feasibility studies of this extremely important high-level post.

Yemen is one of the group of least developed countries. Throughout the past four years of the present decade, it has been afflicted by repeated natural disasters. Those natural disasters have been debilitating to the country in the medium and long terms despite the national and international efforts that were made to mitigate their consequences in the short term.

(Mr. Missary, Yemen)

Shortly after reunification, and as a result of the Gulf crisis, Yemen experienced the return of about a million Yemeni expatriates to their homeland. Over the same period and as a result of recent developments in the Horn of Africa, Yemen has been inundated, in addition, with other expatriates and refugees. We now have a clear picture of the extent of the damage and losses sustained by Yemen as a result of all the aforementioned disasters. In view of the national efforts by the Government of Yemen in response to these situations, I must confirm the importance of international cooperation as a catalyst for such national efforts. In Yemen, we believe in the important role played by the United Nations in this respect, in keeping with the objectives of the international decade.

Ms. DIEGUEZ ARMAS (Mexico): For more than a decade, the international community has been concerned with increasing the capacity of the United Nations system to mobilize and manage timely humanitarian aid in cases of natural disasters and similar emergencies. My delegation has already espoused this concern, and has on various occasions reiterated its commitment to the humanitarian assistance which the United Nations has been providing ever since it was created and which was one of the purposes that gave rise to our Organization.

Over the last few years, the General Assembly has adopted a number of resolutions calling attention to existing obstacles to the effective response of the United Nations system to emergency situations, and it has made appropriate recommendations. But these recommendations have not been carried out. Instead, the search for novel approaches has continued, without regard for the real causes of the problem. One need only point out that in 1987, as a result of lessons learned from Africa, the Secretary-General asked the

(Ms. Dieguez Armas, Mexico)

Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation to act as a coordinating centre for emergencies, but these functions have never actually been performed.

A number of natural disasters and similar emergency situations have taught both the international community and the countries affected a number of painful lessons, making it clear that there is an overriding need to strengthen present programmes of humanitarian assistance. A lack of resources; lack of coordination; competition among agencies; unclear universal criteria; duplication and overlapping among agencies and non-governmental organizations: these and other problems all have to be corrected.

Furthermore, very little attention has been given thus far to the close links between natural disasters, emergencies and development. My delegation believes that any new resolution intended to improve the coordination of international humanitarian assistance must take into account not only prevention and preparedness, but also the transition between the disaster relief and the medium- and long-term development programmes in the countries concerned. Clearly this principle applies particularly to developing countries, which are most vulnerable to the vagaries of nature: matters are only made worse by the problems peculiar to countries with backward economies.

In the tragic aftermath of the war in the Persian Gulf and other emergencies that have affected a number of developing countries in the past year, international debate has focused once again on the urgent need to improve coordination in such a way as to make possible the effective and timely mobilization of the resources of the United Nations system in the humanitarian field.

(Ms. Dieguez Armas, Mexico)

This noble objective has brought to the fore, both within and outside the United Nations, a current of opinion that there is a right to interfere in the internal affairs of a State for humanitarian reasons. To the emergencies already recognized by the United Nations, there is a desire to add other emergencies of a political nature. But the definition of these situations is unclear and could give rise to arbitrary or unilateral interpretations, thereby violating one of the fundamental principles of international relations: absolute respect for the sovereignty of States.

Here and now, my delegation would reiterate its rejection of any attempt to revise this or any other basic principles of international peaceful coexistence, or to give our Organization functions that are not provided in the Charter and in the principles of international law. The United Nations must not be used as a platform for interfering in the internal affairs of States or undermining their sovereignty.

My delegation is not convinced either that the creation of new arrangements would be the best way to resolve the problem which legitimately commands our concern, particularly if such new arrangements are to be given broad, vague mandates in an attempt to disregard the primary role that should be played by the State concerned in initiating and promoting emergency assistance in its territory. It is absolutely necessary that, in the negotiations to be carried on here in the coming days, we should achieve a balance between international cooperation, the responsibility of States, and respect for their sovereignty, in order to ensure a collective decision that would prevent arbitrary or unilateral actions.

Mr. ELARABY (Egypt): The question of improving the coordination and enhancing the effectiveness of United Nations humanitarian emergency assistance requires constant examination and review. No task could be more important than that of saving lives and helping people in distress.

Recent events have reaffirmed the central role of the United Nations and the outstanding contribution it can make in mitigating human suffering; but these events have also raised problems of coordination and cooperation among the various organs and agencies of the United Nations system. It therefore appears very relevant to discuss ways to improve the functioning of the system.

The views of the Group of 77, of which my delegation is a member, will be expressed fully by the Permanent Representative of Ghana. My delegation would like, however, to make the following comments.

Over the years, various United Nations organs, along with specialized agencies, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization as a focal point, have accomplished tremendous work in emergency relief. They have acquired rich experience and have earned the appreciation of the international community in general, and of the recipient countries in particular.

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

During the Gulf crisis, Egypt was among the countries most affected, and I am pleased to confirm that the work and dedication of the relief staff have been greatly appreciated by my Government. I wish to highlight, in this connection, the role of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) and commend the Co-ordinator, Under-Secretary-General M'Hamed Essaafi, and his staff. In retrospect, one can state that the crisis proved the capacity of the different bodies to respond to a state of emergency. They have carried out their roles efficiently, notwithstanding the limited resources and technical difficulties which were sometimes obstacles in the way of the rapid execution of their tasks.

In order to ensure that timely and more-effective assistance will be provided in the future, various approaches to the question of coordination have been suggested formally and informally. In this context, my delegation wishes to express its appreciation for the Secrtary-General's report on the matter (A/46/568). The report constitutes important input for our deliberations by providing practical proposals for streamlining the activities of the United Nations system in the field of humanitarian emergency assistance with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of international response.

Comprehensive in scope, dealing with all aspects of emergency situations, including early warning, prevention, preparedness, stand-by capacity and strengthened coordination, the report stresses two essential conditions to ensure the most positive results: first, the resources provided must be sufficient and available; and, secondly, coordination within the United Nations system and with Member States, both recipients and donors, as well as with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, must be improved.

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

While my delegation agrees with this approach, we believe that before any step is taken all the proposals should be considered in depth, weighing their pros and cons carefully. It is important to focus on cooperation between the different organs and agencies in New York and Geneva in order to ensure streamlining and avoid overlapping. The existing mandates of all the agencies should also be carefully examined.

Linked to the previous point is the need to take into account the different processes of accountability that exist in the various organs and agencies, processes that influence their autonomous initiatives.

As regards the degree of automaticity with which emergency relief activities can begin to be implemented, my delegation would like to stress that two steps are at present necessary: the request of the affected country and the decision by the appropriate United Nations authority to respond.

We should be very careful not to raise expectations regarding the capacity of the United Nations to deal with all types of emergencies, particularly those with political aspects or caused by internal conflicts. In these cases, many factors limit the system's capacity and the scope of action has so far been rather limited.

It is important to understand the nature of the relationship between the problem of emergencies and the question of development. The level of development has direct consequences on the degree of preparedness and vulnerability of disaster-prone countries. Emergency relief assistance is helpful in overcoming difficulties in the short run. More fundamental is the need to help developing countries speed their development, raise their level of scientific research and high technology and train qualified personnel so

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

that their ability to contribute to the prevention of disasters and the mobilization of relief efforts will be strengthened.

My delegation fully supports all efforts aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectivenss of the system's emergency response capacity and attaches great importance to a re-examination of the United Nations role. It is quite clear that there is a need to ensure the continuity of financial resources through the establishment of a permanent fund for humanitarian assistance. UNDRO's technical and manpower resources need to be increased in order to identify the local, regional and international capabilities available to provide humanitarian aid and to ensure a rapid response to any request for assistance. At the same time, we recognize that direct contact with the Secretary-General is important, indeed necessary, for the mobilization of international efforts.

The notion of a right of intervention is, at the present stage of evolution of legal norms, still controversial. Contemporary international law does not yet recognize such a right. It should, however, be pointed out that international law is progressively developing. The injunction contained in Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter, which prohibits United Nations intervention "in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State", has undergone many conceptual changes as a result of the conclusion of a host of international conventions. The development of legal norms requires a degree of consensus which my delegation has not yet detected.

It is our firm conviction that United Nations activities in the field of humanitarian assistance should not constitute infringements on national

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

sovereignty. Improvement of those activities does not hinge on the recognition of any right of intervention.

In conclusion, my delegation approaches the item under consideration from the angle of the collective responsibilty of the international community to provide humanitarian assistance and to mitigate suffering. All States, regardless of their stage of development, face this challenge. It is our duty to improve and enhance our ability to shoulder this collective responsibility.

Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil): The inclusion in our agenda of an item on the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance was a timely initiative, and I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the Member States of the European Community for having requested that inclusion. I also wish to express our recognition of the excellent work carried out on this question by Ambassador Jan Eliasson, Permanent Representative of Sweden, as Chairman of the Third Committee of the Economic and Social Council. The views of the Group of 77 as a whole on this item will be expressed later by the representative of Ghana.

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

Seldom is the expression "United Nations" more concretely meaningful than in the field of humanitarian assistance. Nowhere perhaps is the ideal of nations united more tangible. Indeed, what goal could unite us more intensely than that of saving lives and alleviating human suffering? From an ethical standpoint what activities could be more commendable and more unobjectionable than those intended to provide relief and care for those in need, what inactivity more unforgivable?

The various United Nations agencies that work in the humanitarian field are among the best-known faces of this Organization in different regions of the world. For many men, women and children the sky blue of our flag has been made synonymous with the comfort of a friendly and helping hand.

For these important achievements it is appropriate that we give due credit and recognition to the single-minded and generous dedication of United Nations relief workers throughout the world, often operating under extremely difficult circumstances and sometimes at the risk of their personal safety.

Over the last several months, much to our sorrow, we have witnessed a number of emergency situations in different regions of the world, and the ensuing tragedy of millions of fellow human beings for whom life has been made all but impossible as a result of natural disasters or of the combined impact of underdevelopment, hunger, disease and violence. The fate of these men, women and children and the sheer magnitude of their tragedy, which appears even greater when compared with our limited capacities, could not but give us pause and make us ponder that the decade that was lost for development was also, to a large extent, a decade lost for the prevention of such human emergencies.

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

Too often the process of development is portrayed as simply an improvement in standards of living or an increase in access to the facilities of modern life. Development is also a process through which societies acquire stronger resilience and a greater capacity to cope with unexpected hardship and catastrophe.

No words would be strong enough to highlight the tragic consequences of human emergencies, and the developing world's utter vulnerability to catastrophe denounces the unfortunate failure to achieve significant progress and substantial results in international cooperation for development. That linkage is unavoidable.

Excellent work has been carried out by United Nations humanitarian agencies, and that continues at this very moment in places far away from this Hall. Notwithstanding that, many authoritative voices, including that of the Secretary-General, have expressed concern that the mechanisms available for mobilizing and coordinating humanitarian emergency assistance within the United Nations system could and should be improved. The Brazilian Government supports that view and the efforts that must accordingly be made to achieve better, more effective results in emergency assistance.

Many of the procedures and mechanisms we use today for dealing with emergency situations are the result of learning by doing, in particular in the area of coordination. Many such mechanisms and procedures were built on the experience gained through a practice that included shining examples of inspired creativity and sometimes mere improvisation dictated by a well-justified sense of urgency. While this is perfectly understandable, given the special circumstances under which humanitarian work is pursued, it is fair to say that the resulting situation is one which is not always clear.

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

Different ideas and proposals have been floated, by Member States and by the Secretary-General, for improving the way in which we do things in emergency relief operations. We are convinced that all those suggestions deserve our best attention, and we are willing to continue discussing them on the basis of a careful and detailed assessment of past experience, as well as on the basis of our common humanitarian goals. We support the idea of holding informal consultations with a view to ensuring in-depth discussions on those various proposals and on their technical advisability.

In the very useful, but very preliminary, discussion held in the Economic and Social Council in July my delegation put forward its views on the broad directions that should guide our deliberations on this question. I wish to elaborate on some of those concepts.

First, it seems clear at this stage that the best approach we can take is to address in a pragmatic and result-oriented fashion the questions of availability of resources and of coordination, without attempting to change, by subtraction or addition, the content of the mandates that already exist, or the structures of accountability that correspond to each of those mandates. If we agree on that, a great deal of time can be saved by making it plain in our deliberations that they are not intended to introduce changes in mandates or to create new substantive mandates.

Due account has to be taken of the heterogeneous nature of the competences of the various humanitarian agencies. As we have previously pointed out, the question of disaster relief and the question of assistance to, and protection of, refugees, to mention but two questions, each forms a separate issue area, each with its own specific features. There is an obvious need for coordination, under the authority of the General Assembly, among the

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

agencies working in these different areas, but that coordination has to be carried out without prejudice to the specific responsibilities inherent in each particular mandate. A proper balance has to be struck between the need for centralized coordination and the qualitative differences between the various elements that are to be coordinated.

If the establishment of new structures is to be considered, it is essential that we clearly understand whence the need for such new structures arises and the exact relationships they would maintain with the existing ones. We are examining this question with an open mind. As a matter of principle, new levels of decision-making should be added if, and only if, it is clearly demonstrated that the existing ones are not appropriate or sufficient.

The effectiveness of humanitarian emergency assistance is to a large extent contingent on the ability to respond promptly to requests by Member States. To that end, it is essential that the required resources be made available in a timely manner to the various agencies. Here again we must strike a balance between the possible advantages and disadvantages of centralized mechanisms. Should we come to the conclusion that we need, to some extent, more centralized procedures, we might have to consider ways to ensure the necessary flexibility in the relations between affected States and separate United Nations agencies. Needless to say, the management of resources involves appropriate procedures for accountability to the membership.

In the on-going debate on this matter, mention has been made of the possible relations between humanitarian assistance and national sovereignty. As we have stated on previous occasions, and as is recognized in resolutions adopted by the Assembly, United Nations humanitarian activities do not

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

constitute infringements of sovereignty. The improvement and enhancement of humanitarian activities is not contingent on conceptual revisions or innovations in that connection.

The fact that emergency assistance is always provided at the request, and with the consent of, the affected countries is not only a premise of humaritarian work. It also makes our deliberations here much easier. Its recognition can obviate the need for protracted discussions on some of the questions involved, including, possibly, questions related to the definition of the term "emergency".

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

Lastly, while we can and must improve what calls for improvement, we have to be careful not to fix what is not broken. One thing that is not broken is the very concept of what constitutes humanitarian action as distinct from all other forms of activity, most particularly, political and coercive activities. Do what we may, we must at all costs preserve the purity of that concept and prevent its being unduly affected by extraneous realities.

Humanitarian activities in general - and emergency assistance is no exception - must, by definition, be dissociated from political considerations of all hues: they are, by definition, neutral and impartial. Only by preserving the pristine humanitarian character of these activities can we avoid disagreements on political questions - or on any other questions - becoming impediments to emergency relief activities.

It is not by chance that the notion of humanitarian activities was developed in connection with situations of armed conflict. The secret of effectiveness in the humanitarian field is that, even when nations disagree on everything else, even when they clash, they can still agree that the wounded must be assisted, that the sick must receive adequate care, that suffering must be relieved. That is, if I may say so, a minimal straight line drawn in the crooked timber of humanity. It is the fact that agreement on such a core of minimum values is discernible - this fact and nothing else - that makes humanitarian action as such possible.

The need to keep humanitarian activities free of extraneous elements entails important consequences for the way we deal with the question of prevention. Addressing the political root causes of emergency situations is an essential task for this Organization; it is doubtful, however, whether any positive gain would be derived from characterizing that task as being included

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

in any humanitarian mandate or as being too closely related to it; rather, it would seem more advisable, in each case, carefully to separate humanitarian from political endeavours so that the former can be pursued regardless of the success or failure of the latter.

The greatest merit of the humanitarian approach, and its distinctive note, resides in the fact that pursuing it does not assume success or even progress in the political field. Humanitarian action is incompatible with an all-or-nothing attitude. Its only assumption is that certain things can and ought to be done even if they do not solve the whole problem, or rather, that at times certain things ought to be done precisely because the larger problems remain unsolved.

Mr. HATANO (Japan): At the summer session of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva, intensive discussions were held on the question of the response of the United Nations to emergencies. The deliberations addressed various aspects of the response, and a number of areas where improvements might be made were identified. I should like to thank Ambassador Eliasson of Sweden, Chairman of the Third Committee, for his excellent summary of those discussions. Since that session, ideas have been further elaborated and some specific proposals have been put forward for further efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations system in the area of humanitarian emergency relief activities.

I should like to express my appreciation for the Secretary-General's report (A/46/568), which contains very important specific recommendations. While my delegation can endorse many of those recommendations, it will need to examine some others carefully.*

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* Mr. Ghesal (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

In recent years, the larger numbers of disasters both natural and man-made have resulted in human loss, suffering and devastation on an unprecedented scale. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report, the response of the international community, and of the United Nations system in particular, to such disasters has rightly become the focus of major international concern.

The United Nations system is increasingly being called upon to play a leading role in ensuring a swift and effective response to all these emergencies. However, recent experience in, for example, the Gulf, Bangladesh and the Horn of Africa has revealed both the extent and the limits of the capacity of the United Nations to provide emergency relief. My delegation thus supports the view that there is an urgent need, inter alia, to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to respond to emergencies and, in particular, to complex and large-scale disasters.

Much attention has been focused on the question of coordination. While I do not wish to downplay the importance of coordination, I believe that it is important to place the matter in its proper perspective. A response by the international community to an emergency very often involves the collective efforts of, and a division of responsibilities among, the affected country, United Nations organizations, donor governments, international agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and non-governmental organizations.

Among the United Nations organs, actual operational relief activities - such as delivery of relief materials - are undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

Organization (WHO), among others. At the same time, a coordinating role is performed by the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator; by a special representative of the Secretary-General who is entrusted, on an ad hoc basis, with the task of coordinating activities in response to a particular emergency; or, in some cases, by a designated lead agency. In short, the role of the Coordinator, whose ultimate authority derives from the Secretary-General, is to maximize the capacities of the operational entities of the United Nations system. It is essential for the role of the Coordinator to be enhanced; in particular, the Coordinator should maintain close contact with the Secretary-General.

At the same time, however, it must be borne in mind that the function of the Coordinator can in no way replace operational functions. For this reason, I believe that highest priority should be given to rationalizing and utilizing existing agencies within the United Nations system. Also, the mandates and budgets of these agencies, which are authorized by their governing bodies, should be fully respected.

Having said that, let me explain my delegation's approach to the question of coordinator. Twenty years ago, the General Assembly adopted resolution 2816 (XXVI), requesting the Secretary-General to appoint a Disaster Relief Coordinator who would have a very broad mandate to mobilize, direct and coordinate relief activities.

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

Since then, more than a dozen resolutions, including, for example, resolutions 36/225 and 41/201, have been adopted by the General Assembly to strengthen UNDRO. I believe it is particularly relevant to quote here a paragraph that has been included in many of those resolutions.

"The General Assembly,

"...

"Reaffirms its belief that the strengthening and reinforcing of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator offers the most efficient and economic means of effectively coordinating the relief activities of the United Nations system as a whole...". (resolution 37/144, para. 13)

My delegation does not exclude consideration of the proposal by the Secretary-General, as contained in paragraph 31 of his report, to appoint a high-level official. In this context, however, it should be recalled that some major donors have reiterated the need to reduce the number of high-level posts in the Secretariat. At the same time, my delegation fully recognizes the need to facilitate and galvanize the prompt response of the United Nations to disasters. Let us therefore examine whether UNDRO has in fact functioned as expected and, if it has not, let us identify any shortcomings in the existing mechanism and suggest possible remedies.

At any rate, the Coordinator should seek to establish a clear division of tasks among agencies and should in no way interfere in actual relief operations undertaken by agencies. There is a need for coordinated need assessment, plans of action, joint appeals and provision of information to the agencies and Governments concerned.

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

Rather than calling interagency meetings to respond to emergencies on an ad hoc basis, it would be helpful to establish in Geneva an interagency emergency standing committee that would include representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the League of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Organization for Migration. Arrangements should also be made to facilitate prompt consultations with Governments concerned.

I should like to emphasize the importance of prevention, early warning and preparedness in mitigating loss and human suffering engendered by sudden disasters. Thus I would like to suggest that the early warning system that is already in existence and in operation in the United Nations system be reviewed, consolidated and strengthened. Early warning information received by one agency should be shared with the others. My Government would also stress that activities of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, including disaster management training, should be accelerated.

Moreover, regarding an early warning system relating to refugees and displaced persons, my delegation believes the report to be prepared by the Office for Research and the Collection of Information should provide a basis for further study.

In the event of a large-scale or sudden emergency, what is required most urgently is not only money but very often relief materials and experienced personnel. Thus my delegation believes a system should be developed for the compilation and updating of lists of available relief materials and human resources, including a back-up capability for disaster relief within United Nations agencies as well as from Governments, the ICRC and other non-governmental organizations as appropriate.

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

Funding also remains an important issue in strengthening the United Nations emergency relief capacity. The efforts of United Nations operating agencies and UNDRO in responding to large-scale emergencies have frequently been criticized. Recent experience in the Gulf region and in the Horn of Africa has, however, revealed that financial commitments by the international community fell short of the appeals made by the Secretary-General or coordinators; in some instances, actual payment was delayed. It is only fair, then, that Member States acknowledge that these United Nations relief activities were weakened by the shortage of funds.

Each relief operating agency has its own reserve fund and/or other emergency arrangements in order to cope with the initial phase of an emergency. These contingency arrangements within the respective mandates of agencies should be strengthened. The provision of adequately funded emergency reserves to respective agencies is crucial in coping with an emergency in its initial phase, which is often especially difficult.

As regards the idea of a central emergency revolving fund, as proposed in paragraph 14 of the Secretary-General's report, my delegation is not yet convinced of the need to create a central emergency revolving fund in addition to those funding arrangements that are already in place to meet specific requirements in each operating agency. At any rate, my delegation is of the view that any funding of this nature should, as a matter of principle, be based on voluntary contributions.

Last but not least, my delegation reaffirms the principle of sovereignty. It believes that the initiation and implementation of humanitarian assistance in its territory is the primary responsibility of the Government of the affected country and that the Government should assume

(Mr. Hatano, Japan)

responsibility for facilitating and supporting humanitarian assistance operations for members of its population who are in need. My delegation is also of the view that the United Nations should ensure consent from the Government as early as possible for the implementation of relief activities in order to ensure that they begin promptly and proceed smoothly.

This principle is incorporated in General Assembly resolution 45/100, which was adopted by consensus. In my view, the question relating to sovereignty and international norms should be more appropriately dealt with in the Third Committee, and at this session we should limit our discussion to issues of an institutional or administrative nature.

In concluding, I wish simply to express the hope that efforts will be made to accommodate the views of other delegations so that the draft resolution on this important issue can be adopted by consensus. I might add in this connection that it would be wise to incorporate in the draft resolution only essential elements and to call upon the Governing Councils of operating agencies, such as the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to elaborate on specific modalities within their respective mandates.

Ms. FRITSCHE (Liechtenstein): The past year has been another year of tremendous political changes in the world. It has also been a successful year for the United Nations, with the result that there is an increasing demand for international action in various fields. Humanitarian emergency assistance is one of these fields.

Disasters, whatever their cause and form, must be of concern to the international community. They have often resulted in immense human suffering before adequate United Nations action could be taken. The international community must assume responsibility for giving the best possible assistance to countries struck by catastrophes. It is not only natural disasters that can have devastating consequences for the people concerned; regrettably conflicts of a political nature too can, and do, cause human misery. It is therefore imperative that we aim at improving and strengthening the United Nations emergency-response capacity.

In recent months - following the adoption of resolution 45/221 last year - there have been discussions at various levels on how humanitarian emergency assistance through the United Nations system could be strengthened. In this context I should like to mention the constructive discussion that took place during the summer session of the Economic and Social Council. By tradition, Liechtenstein is committed to the provision of humanitarian aid. We therefore welcome and wholeheartedly support these endeavours.

We are of the opinion that humanitarian assistance is first and foremost the responsibility of the States affected by disasters. However, those States cannot bear the sole responsibility. Recent experience has shown that some disasters are of such magnitude that their effects can be overcome only with the support of the international community. I should like to take this

(Ms. Fritsche, Liechtenstein)

opportunity to pay tribute to the United Nations specialized agencies and organizations for their recent humanitarian-relief activities. We are very grateful also to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for the assistance that, under its mandate, it provides, especially to all those protected by international humanitarian law. It is of the utmost importance that the ICRC be closely associated with existing and any new mechanisms for the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Despite the United Nations system's undeniable merits in the field of humanitarian assistance, it has become obvious that further improvement is possible and necessary. We would welcome steps to optimize the early-warning system, an enhanced dialogue between donors and recipient countries, and an improvement in the existing institutions through closer cooperation between the United Nations and donors and recipient States, as well as non-governmental organizations.

Therefore - without prejudging other reforms of the United Nations Secretariat - we should welcome the appointment of a high-level coordinator with a view to improving the efficiency of the United Nations system. He or she should act under the personal authority of, and should have direct access to, the Secretary-General. The high-level coordinator should maintain permanent contact between donor and recipient States, the relevant United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations.

Furthermore, we should welcome the establishment of an emergency standing committee, based in Geneva and headed by the high-level coordinator. This committee should include representatives of all humanitarian agencies.

(Ms. Fritsche, Liechtenstein)

Equally, non-governmental organizations should participate. As a location, Geneva offers the advantage that existing structures could be utilized.

Disaster-prone areas and recipient countries themselves need to improve their preparedness for emergencies and their prevention strategies. In his report the Secretary-General states that the United Nations system should increase its efforts to help Governments to develop disaster-mitigation programmes. We fully support this proposal.

Effective humanitarian assistance is possible only when adequate resources are available. Aware that improving United Nations activities in this field has budgetary consequences, we should welcome the establishment, on a trial basis, of a revolving emergency fund for the purpose of making possible an immediate initial response to catastrophes.

My delegation would like to thank all those countries involved in the recent reform initiatives. We stand ready to participate in the ongoing dialogue, with a view to defining clearly the way in which, and the extent to which, the existing structures might be adapted and improved.

Mr. KOUCHNER (France) (interpretation from French): The representative of the Netherlands gave a detailed account of the initiative of the States members of the European Community. I should like to make it clear that my country subscribes completely to this initiative.

The coordination of humanitarian assistance in the case of natural or man-made disasters is a response to an acutely felt need. Over the last two decades such disasters have caused approximately 3 million deaths and have made 800 million people homeless. Of these victims, 90 per cent are to be found in the countries of the third world. These people are already afflicted

(Mr. Koschnar, France)

by underdevelopment, and this has had a multiplying effect on the human consequences of disasters.

Over the last 20 years there has undoubtedly been an improvement in the way in which emergencies are responded to. Having returned recently from the unfortunate countries in the Horn of Africa, I should like especially to commend all the agencies of the United Nations, the International Red Cross, the local Red Cross and the non-governmental organizations for their efforts.

Nevertheless, experience in this area indicates that, despite the progress that has been made - and I emphasize that progress has been made - there are still a number of dysfunctions when it comes to preparing for, organizing, conducting and following up aid, whether from intergovernmental organizations or from charitable associations. These untoward situations sometimes result from an excess of improperly coordinated goodwill, which may, indeed, prove to be extremely prejudicial to countries and peoples already sorely tried. Sometimes such a situation is regarded as "a disaster within a disaster" - to use words uttered during a World Health Organization Congress - and presents the stricken country with the additional difficulty of the need to harmonize the efforts of well-meaning but badly coordinated rescuers. We must be constantly aware, and must remind the countries that are fortunate enough to be wealthy as well as those that are unfortunate to be poor, that aid is intended to relieve suffering, and not to satisfy first-aid workers.

(Mr. Kouchner, France)

Some of these dysfunctions are moreover the result of imprecise or erroneous information about the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the actual disaster. In this connection it may have been noted that informants, like Governments, more often than not tend at the outset to exaggerate the difficulties involved and the figures given very often have to be revised downward later on. That is fortunate. The initial announcements are nevertheless the disinformation of a generous response, gathered in an excessive or erratic way, based less on fact than on rumour. Therefore, rather than rushing into the process of providing information, which is so essential in this age of speed and fleeting emotion, we should get down to ferreting out the truth, cooperating with the press and devising a way to follow up events, particularly as regards television. These days the memory of a particular disaster does not last much longer than a week or two. One event follows another, and then the victims are forgotten and the criticism of the aid begins. This is a constant feature of public opinion. It was made particularly aware of the difficulties encountered recently in giving aid in the Gulf, in Bangladesh and in the Horn of Africa - and I have had experience of this elsewhere. They are the same difficulties, varying according to the different contexts but identical in their technical components: differing evaluations, delays, unfortunate rivalry, duplication, the absence of logistics, unavailability of stocks and difficult access to the victims.

A comparison of data and the consideration of possible solutions to the problem of such phenomena are essential today. In this connection I should like to commend the Secretary-General's report, which is indeed a valuable contribution to thinking on this subject.

(Mr. Kouchner, France)

In my present functions, as well as in my past experience, I have frequently been faced with problems of coordinating emergency assistance. This gives rise above all to problems of disaster management.

Any rationalisation of aid must be based on a thorough mastery of what we had once called "the epidemiology of disasters". A scientific approach to the problem means that we have to rid ourselves both of the sort of fatalism which is inherent in the metaphysical vision of these disasters, and of media exhibitionism, which indulges in unduly emotional exploitation.

The natural disaster has more to do with the probable rather than the foreseeable, the possible rather than the expected, and the unforeseen rather than the selective. This is not a reason for giving way to resignation or for simply muddling through. Our responsibilities are both preparatory and operational. They are both preventive and remedial. They are always established in accordance with the requirements of the victims. This is what could be called the morality of extreme emergency.

The exercise is not always easy. Despite progress in scientific knowledge and technological response, the vulnerability of contemporary societies to such disasters has not been reduced - it has even grown greater.

Rigourous methods for evaluating damage and needs are essential if there is to be a coordinated handling of disasters. This is a real science that is coming into being. This was the thrust of one of the proposals which we made in September 1988 in the draft joint manifesto on the epidemiology of disasters which I addressed to the United Nations Disaster Relief Office (UNDRO). I am very pleased to note that it appears among the first approaches outlined at the third and fourth meetings of the national emergency relief services.

(Mr. Kouchner, France)

Are approximations and empirical data inevitable in emergencies? We cannot claim that we will ever be rid of them completely nor can we hope that we will have perfectly tailor-made assistance operations, but we can reduce the problems.

We know from experience the kind of needs that are involved in each particular type of disaster. Nevertheless, in each instance, identifying these needs should be determined in a specific way, which requires the participation of qualified experts, not so many of them perhaps, but at least coordinated.

The quality of the information provided depends essentially on the teams which gather it. The presence in the field of representatives of the great family of the United Nations and the major non-governmental organizations experienced in this field will improve the reliability of the information. I am aware of the quality and reliability of the regional vigils of UNDPO and the accuracy of the telexes they send to us. It is essential that these data be kept up to date all the time and constantly re-evaluated as the situation evolves and as external or national aid becomes available.

But today we must go even further. We have to contemplate a policy of coordination and increased harmonization, one which is both more rapid and more effective.

I am fully aware of the difficulties of this exercise, but the stakes are too high to ignore, since it is a question of reducing the number of disaster victims and easing the burden which the Governments of the victim countries have to bear.

(Mr. Kouchner, France)

When a natural disaster strikes, a great variety of aid comes from many different countries, provided by very dissimilar organisms.

Multilateral coordination within the United Nations system has been fragmentary, case-by-case or blow-by-blow, in the case of certain humanitarian actions where a sort of consortium of organizations and agencies have joined together to deal with a particular circumstance. Thus, the United Nations intervention in the Sudan, where there was a mixture of famine and war, illustrated these new approaches in 1988. In this context, France, at the request of Mr. Grant, allocated two Transal aircraft of the French army to the airlift organized by the International Red Cross to serve the main agglomerations in the south of the Sudan.

Today, the situation is equally tragic, and despite the remarkable efforts of Mr. James Jonah, not enough humanitarian aid can reach the victims. A coordination vested with greater authority would surely help us overcome these obstacles, so that there would no longer be situations where human beings are dying a few kilometres away from available aid.

From this you can see how much attention France is giving to the idea of naming a coordinator. It would be better to say a "harmonizer", if the word existed since use must be made of the means available to the United Nations agencies in a positive and non-constrictive way to ensure the greatest benefit for the victims and the best use of donor resources.

This "harmonizer", this coordinator - since the word "harmonizer" does not exist - would be concerned mainly with getting initial information on the disaster and synthesizing it; harmonizing the action of the agencies; launching a consolidated appeal to the donors; immediately allocating the

(Mr. Kouchner, France)

necessary funds for rendering first aid; appealing for human and material aid from agencies, Governments and non-governmental organizations; and making contact with the authorities in the stricken country in order to ensure access to the victims.

The Secretary-General alone has the necessary authority to assume these various responsibilities. But, quite clearly, he cannot exercise them personally; coping with a crisis requires, at least for some days, absolute round-the-clock availability. It is quite evident that in a number of difficult situations - Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, South-East Asia, the Middle East, Central America - the Secretary-General has seen the need to appoint a special adviser.

This is why in the future he should be able to rely on a senior official who has direct access to him and who also has a great measure of authority vested in him. The role of the coordinator would obviously not be to substitute for the agencies, which alone have operational capability. Relying on the structure of UNDRO, whose experience is incomparable, he would make it possible for the agencies to accomplish their missions more rapidly, with greater complementarity, and therefore more effectively. Their role would thereby be enhanced.

(Mr. Kouchner, France)

The Coordinator's primary task will be to preside over an emergency committee, comprising, on a permanent basis, the competent agencies of the United Nations system. The committee would be brought into play in emergencies, and would therefore serve in Geneva as a meeting point for non-governmental organizations, the stricken countries and the donor countries. The venue would be Geneva, because it is essentially, but not exclusively, a focus of efforts within the United Nations system and in the permanent missions of Member States to respond to emergency situations.

After appointing the Coordinator and setting up the committee, the establishment of an emergency fund is the third essential element of the proposal put forward by the Twelve. Victims cannot wait for aid while the donors, that is, the governments and world public opinion, respond to the first consolidated appeal issued by the United Nations. Resources must be made available immediately in order to finance the dispatch of teams, foodstuffs, medicine and equipment - a revolving fund, with substantial initial resources and with a speedy response capacity, would enable the Coordinator to advance the necessary funds to the operational agencies. France intends to help set up this fund.

Some reference should also be made to local structures and coordination in the field. France's experience in this regard may be useful for our current consideration. The task of making speedy assessments during fact-finding missions has become a matter for experts, including those trained in logistics. We have such experts in France. However, we could save even more time - the first few hours preceding direct intervention, when life and death are hanging in the balance. To this end, France has taken the decision to establish, in each of the embassies of vulnerable countries, the post of

(Mr. Kouchner, France)

humanitarian attaché. This diplomatic initiative has proven to be quite successful and indeed very beneficial both in theory and in practice. The official will already be in the field. He will be familiar with local aid channels and the subtleties of local administration. With the appropriate means at his disposal, he will be capable of immediately grasping the needs and of transmitting them to the appropriate agencies. He will be familiar with the topography of the site, as he will have studied it. He will await the volunteers and coordinate their work.

The project that the Twelve are now submitting to the General Assembly is precisely intended to ensure that a single United Nations official responsible for coordinating system-wide efforts is appointed at the country level.

Finally, particular attention should be paid to the sovereignty of the States within whose territory the disaster has occurred and towards which the aid is to be directed. Let us not be mistaken. Humanitarian action respects sovereignty and State authority. It can in no way be used to intervene in affairs that are essentially under the authority of the nation. That is why, in order to preserve both the principle of non-interference and the principle of free access to aid to the victims of emergencies, the General Assembly has recalled one of the main principles of humanitarian law - the principle of subsidiary function. According to this principle, it is the territorial States which, under resolutions 43/131 and 45/100, have the

> "primary role in the initiation, organization, coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance within their respective territories." (resolutions 43/131 and 45/100, para. 2)

Therefore, humanitarian assistance should be a subsidiary action that is never taken unilaterally. In the two resolutions referred to, the General

(Mr. Kouchner, France)

Assembly invites the States in need of such assistance to facilitate its provision by

"the supply of food, medicines and health care, for which access to victims is essential." (ibid., para. 4)

Under the resolutions, free access is of concern both to the affected State and to neighbouring and bordering States, which are urged

"to participate closely with the affected countries in international efforts with a view to facilitating ... the transit of humanitarian assistance." (resolution 43/131, para. 6; resolution 45/100, para. 7)

In this connection, I should like to pay a particular tribute to the Bulgarian authorities who, during the events of 1989-1990, considerably assisted the delivery of French first aid to Romania. The principle of free access clearly should not be construed to be tantamount to the mere right of transit. It corrresponds to the idea put forward by the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, presided over by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan and Hassan bin Talal, that it should be possible, if necessary, to make use of emergency corridors to reach the victims rapidly, while taking full account of the sovereignty of the States concerned.

May someone from the field conclude by paying a tribute to all those humanitarian organizations that I have seen at work for 25 years under extremely difficult circumstances, ministering to the misfortunes of others. There are many such agents in the United Nations system - volunteers from charitable organizations who work together, are exposed to risk and who sometimes risk their lives. Some of them even now are risking their lives in

(Mr. Kouchner, France)

various parts of the world. They do so in order to save others. I have just returned from Yugoslavia, where both journalists and volunteers are paying a heavy toll. They can be added to the long list of those for whom saving victims in other countries is the performance of a duty of solidarity. From person to person, to preserve what is the most dear and fragile of possessions in this world - life. We have come together to contribute to this process more effectively. Let us hope that our efforts will be crowned with success.

AGENDA ITEM 17 (continued)

ELECTIONS TO FILL VACANCIES IN SUBSIDIARY ORGANS:

(c) ELECTION OF NINETEEN MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE LAW

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): The General Assembly will now proceed to the election of 19 members of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law to replace those members whose term of office expires on 3 May 1992.

The 19 outgoing members are: Argentina, Chile, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Italy, Kenya, Lesotho, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Netherlands, Sierra Leone, Spain, the United States of America, Uruguay and Yugoslavia.

These members are eligible for immediate re-election.

(The President)

I should like to remind members that as of 4 May 1992 the following States will continue to be represented on the Commission: Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Singapore, Togo, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Therefore, those 17 States are not eligible for re-election.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure the election shall be held by secret ballot and there shall be no nominations.

May I, however, recall paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election.

In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on that basis?

It was so decided.

Mr. DANGUE REWAKA (Gabon) (interpretation from French): As Chairman of the African Group for the month of November, I should like to point out, in regard to the list of African candidates for the Commission on International Trade Law, that Kenya, Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania are the candidates. "Madagascar" mistakenly appears, instead of "United Republic of Tanzania", in the document which the Executive Secretary of the Organization of African Unity circulated this morning.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I shall now read out the names of the candidates endorsed by regional groups: for four seats from the African States - Kenya, Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania;

(The President)

for four seats from the Asian States - India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Saudi Arabia and Thailand; for three seats from the Eastern European States - Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland; for four seats from the Latin American and Caribbean States - Ecuador and Uruguay; and for four seats from the Western European and other States - Austria, Italy, Spain and the United States of America.

Mr. WALKER (Jamaica): In my capacity as Chairman of the Latin American and Caribbean Group for the month of November, I am now in a position to inform members of the Assembly that happily there are now four candidates for the four vacancies available to the Group on the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.

You, Sir, have indicated that Ecuador and Uruguay are candidates. May I now add that Chile and Argentina are also candidates, bringing up the list to four.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): Since the number of candidates from the African States, the Asian States, the Eastern European States, the Latin American and Caribbean States, and the Western European and other States now corresponds to the number of seats to be filled from those groups, I declare those candidates elected members of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law for a six-year term beginning on 4 May 1992.

I congratulate the States which have been elected members of the Commission.

We have concluded our consideration of agenda item 17 (c).

AGENDA ITEM 8 (continued)

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: THIRD REPORT OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE (A/46/250/Add.2)

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): The report of the General Committee (A/46/250/Add.2) now before the Assembly concerns the request by the Secretary-General for the inclusion in the agenda of the current session of an additional item entitled "Financing of the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia". The General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the item be included in the agenda.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include in its agenda the additional item entitled "Financing of the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia"?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): The General Committee also decided to recommend to the Assembly that this item be allocated to the Fifth Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly adopts this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): The Chairman of the Fifth Committee will be informed of the decision just taken.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.